

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1 (original): A device for protecting a vessel's loading space, the hold (1) of the ship being provided with cargo pressure tanks (12), from excess pressure if a gas leakage should occur in the loading space, characterized in that the vessel is provided with a ventilating duct (8) which extends along the hold (1) and is separated in a gastight manner from the  
5 remaining rooms of the ship.

Claim 2 (original): A device in accordance with claim 1, characterized in that the ventilating duct (8) extends essentially parallel to a gastight pipe corridor (6), the pipe corridor (6) enclosing at least a loading and unloading pipe (28).

Claim 3 (currently amended): A device in accordance with claim 1~~and/or claim 2~~, characterized in that the hold (1) of the ship is divided into hold sections (2), each hold section (2) being provided with a valve compartment (4) separated in a gastight manner from the remaining rooms of the vessel, the valve compartment (4) enclosing at least one  
5 shut-off valve (30, 33) which is arranged to shut off a pipe connection between the loading and unloading pipe (28) and a cargo pressure tank (12).

Claim 4 (original): A device in accordance with claim 2, characterized in that the hold (1) communicates with the ventilating duct (8) through at least one automatically opening valve (14, 16).

Claim 5 (original): A device in accordance with claim 3, characterized in that the valve compartment (4) communicates with the ventilating duct (8) through at least one automatically opening valve (20, 22).

Claim 6 (original): A device in accordance with claim 2, characterized in that the pipe corridor (6) communicates with the ventilating duct (8) through at least one automatically opening valve (24, 26).

Claim 7 (original): A method for protecting the loading space of a vessel, the hold (1) of the vessel being provided with cargo pressure tanks (12), from excess pressure if a gas leakage should occur in the hold (1), characterized in that at least one valve (14, 16) opens between the hold (1) and a ventilating duct (8) which extends along the hold (1) of the ship and is  
5 separated in a gastight manner therefrom.

Claim 8 (new): A device in accordance with claim 2, characterized in that the hold (1) of the ship is divided into hold sections (2), each hold section (2) being provided with a valve compartment (4) separated in a gastight manner from the remaining rooms of the vessel, the valve compartment (4) enclosing at least one shut-off valve (30, 33) which is arranged to  
5 shut off a pipe connection between the loading and unloading pipe (28) and a cargo pressure tank (12).

Claim 9 (new): A device in accordance with claim 8, characterized in that the valve compartment (4) communicates with the ventilating duct (8) through at least one automatically opening valve (20, 22).